

Smith finalist for Nagurski Trophy



Wake Forest senior cornerback Alphonso Smith is one of the nation's best defensive players.

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

Wake Forest senior cornerback Alphonso Smith was recently named as one of five finalists for the coveted Bronko Nagurski Trophy given annually to the nation's top defensive football player by the Charlotte Touchdown Club.

Smith is joined by TCU end Jerry Hughes, Southern California linebacker Rey Mauluga, Texas end Brian Orakpo and Florida linebacker Brandon Spikes.

Smith is a 5-9, 190-pound fifth-year senior from Pahokee, Fla.

"The winner of the award will be announced on Dec. 7 and presented the Bronko Nagurski Trophy at a gala banquet at the Westin Hotel in Charlotte, N.C. The award is voted on by the Football Writers Association of America.

The award is named after Nagurski, who dominated college football at Minnesota as a bruising fullback and tackle from 1927-29. He could have been an All-America at any position, playing 60 minutes and was the best player on the field regardless of position.

Smith is a three-year starter for the Deacons and leads the team with five interceptions. His 19

career interceptions are a school record and just one shy of the ACC record of 20. Smith was the ACC Defensive Back of the Week following a 33-30 overtime win over Duke on Nov. 1. Smith had a blocked punt for a safety and two interceptions, including the game-winner in overtime. Smith currently leads the nation in passes defended with five interceptions and 13 pass breakups.

Note: Wake Forest senior linebacker Aaron Curry was recently named a semi-finalist for the fifth annual Lott Trophy.

The Lott Trophy is named after Hall of Famer Ronnie Lott and is given to college football's defensive IMPACT Player of the Year. The recipient best exhibits the same characteristics that Lott embodied during his career including integrity, maturity, performance, academics, community and tenacity. Curry is the team tackle leader for the Demon Deacons who are 6-3 on the season and tied for first place in the Atlantic Coast Conference's Atlantic Division. Curry has 77 tackles and a team-high 11.5 tackles for loss this season. He has also been credited with three pass breakups and one interception.

Hill

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good for the kids — despite some of the questionable choices he made. And, more dirt was thrown on him after he was arrested a couple years ago.

I will never forget the phone call I got from Pooh to thank me for writing my column about his troubles. He thanked me for going to bat for him when I didn't have to. I told him that I wasn't doing him a favor. I simply knew how good of a coach he was. I told him that I thought he was a good person as well. I knew that a lot of us made bad choices — sometime — both past and present. I knew that he cared for the kids he coached. I told him that I thought it was unfair for some people to act like he's a villain. I said a few other things too. I don't recall all that I wrote or said.

But I do remember some of the things Pooh used to do for the kids he coached. He paid for a lot of them to play baseball and football. He picked them up for practice and games. He kept up with them throughout the year. The impact he had on so many kids was tremendous, especially on the baseball field. I know so many kids that played baseball simply because of him. It's going to be weird to not see him during my trips to the Twin City Complex.

The last time I spoke to Pooh was near the end of the Pop Warner regular season when I ran into him at N.W. Middle School, during an Indian and Pfafftown Packers game. I told him about some ideas that I had, and he was with the things I was saying. I remember being happy to see him, though. I was always happy to see him for some reason. Now I am sitting here still sad that he's gone.

Pooh, you'll be missed my brother.

UNC-Wilmington's Darion Jeralds returns

Former West Forsyth point guard Darion Jeralds, who's a junior point guard for the UNC-Wilmington squad, was in town to play Wake last week. His Seahawks lost to the



Darion Jeralds.

Deacs 120-88 in the Joel.

Despite the loss, Jerald was still happy to be back in Winston. He even had more than 20 people in the crowd cheering for him, including his old JV coaches Tommy Witt and Cliff Owen, friends and family members — and several others.

"I was very excited to come back and play here," Jerald said after the game. "I've had many Frank Spencer memories in here. It was great to be back. I probably had about 20-something people here to watch me. That was a good thing. I miss home dearly."

Wake wasn't too hospitable towards Jeralds, though. The former West Titan had the task of guarding Jeff Teague, who finished with a game-high 31 points.

"It was pretty tough guarding Jeff," Jeralds said. "I knew he was really good. He gave me difficulties with his athleticism. We had a lot of trouble tonight. As you can tell we're small. But I thought we fought. They're a really good team."

Jeralds finished the night with 3 points, one rebound and two turnovers in 11 minutes of action. It was good to see Darion again. He's still the same well-mannered, clean cut guy that plays like a coach on the floor. He's still cool to talk to after a game. And, he's still got a bright future, either on or off the court.

Anthony Hill is the sports editor for The Chronicle. He can be reached at 722-8624 (ext. 111) or ahill@wschronicle.com.

Norfolk State downs Rams in season finale

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

Norfolk State redshirt sophomore running back DeAngelo Bryant powered the Spartans of Norfolk State to a 17-14 victory over the Rams of Winston-Salem State last Saturday at Bowman Gray Stadium as he tallied a career-high 181 yards on 21 carries and scored once as NSU earned a come-from-behind victory to close out WSSU's season at 3-8 overall.

Branche, who has held to only 27 yards in the first half of play used a 154-yard performance in the game's final two quarters of play as Norfolk State recovered from a four-point halftime deficit to spoil the Rams' senior day that saw 13 WSSU seniors play in the final contest of their WSSU



WSSU's Nic Cooper looks for yards against Norfolk State.

football careers.

WSSU broke the scoring drought less than three minutes into the contest as Alex Chandler recovered a

Norfolk State fumble and sped his way 52 yards for the game's first touchdown.

The Rams defense held for the remainder of the half

as WSSU allowed only a field goal to the Spartans during the first 30 minutes of play en route to a four-point advantage headed into the locker room at halftime.

The two teams traded a pair of touchdowns in the third quarter as the Spartans earned their first lead of the game when Dennis Brown found Darryl Dickerson from 11 yards out as NSU capped a 12-play, 74-yard drive to move ahead 10-7. Undaunted the Rams would respond less than two minutes later as Nicolas Cooper burst out for a 30-yard score, his fourth touchdown of the season, as WSSU earned seven points on a quick four-play drive that took only one minute and 39 seconds as the Rams regained the lead at 14-10.

P.O.N.Y looking for players and coaches

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Twin City P.O.N.Y. Baseball/Softball Association is already taking steps toward the 2009 season by recruiting boys and girls to play — as well as coaches.

The organization is looking for boys and girls between the ages of 4 and 18 to play in the league. The organization is also seeking coaches that are excited and motivated to teach the fundamentals of baseball and softball. Coaches must also be a leader and mentor to the youth. Coaches must also be eager and willing to help as needed.

Applications can be picked up at the Twin City Complex on 2801 New Walkertown Road.

League reps will be there on Dec. 6, Jan. 10, Jan. 17, Jan. 24, Jan. 31, Feb. 7, Feb. 14, Feb. 21 and 28.

League reps will be at 14th Street Recreation Center on Wednesdays (from Dec. 3 through Feb. 18) from 7 p.m. until 8 p.m. Sign-ups will take place on Thursdays at Hanes Hosiery Recreation Center on 501 Reynolds Blvd from 6:30 p.m. until 7:30 p.m. (from Dec. 4 through Feb. 19).

The final day to sign up is Feb. 28. For Additional Information Contact: Vanessa Westbury at (336) 749-8094 or vvc001@triad.rr.com or Vincent Harris at 309-1708/ vincentharris@live.com.

NCCU

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The day was equally emotional for Brown, who said it was "heartbreaking."

"On top of that, I won't even be able to play in the last game," added Brown, who shared the moment with his father, Stafford Whitlow, and brother, Myron Brown.

Brown's college career was cut short when his collarbone was broken during the second quarter of the Eagles' win over rival North Carolina A&T on Oct. 4. Still, in only two-and-a-half seasons as an Eagle, Brown has established himself as one of the top quarterbacks in NCCU history.

Among the school's all-time career leaders, Brown ranks third in pass completions (399), third in passing touchdowns (46), fourth in passing yards (5,202) and fourth in total offense (5,207).

Brown swooped onto the scene in the fall of 2006, taking the reins of the Eagle offense amidst controversy and uncertainty. As a rookie, however, he demonstrated the poise and confidence that became his trademark, leading NCCU to the school's first-ever undefeated regular-season with a record of 11-0, a second consecutive conference championship and the

2006 Black College Football National Championship.

That season, Brown threw for 2,577 yards, third most in school history, and 26 touchdowns, a mark not even the legendary Earl "Air" Harvey reached as an Eagle. Brown was voted as the CIAA Offensive Player of the Year and the SBN Sports Black College Football Offensive Player of the Year.

The close connection

Gilbert and Brown share more than just football records at NCCU. Through the years, they have developed a solid friendship.

"B.G. is probably one of the closest friends I have made since I've been here," Brown said. "We used to play pool almost every single day."

Gilbert, too, remembers the countless hours of shooting billiards, and says there is more to Brown than what people see on the field.

"Not only is Stafford a great quarterback, a great athlete and a great leader, he is also a great person to be around," Gilbert said. "He always does the right thing."

As for their college football careers, they will be forever documented in the Eagles' record books and will one day be framed with a picture to be displayed in the NCCU Athletic Hall of Fame.

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